THEOSOPHY

VOL. 67, NO. 10 AUGUST, 1979

Is it enough for man to know that he exists? Is it enough to be formed a human being to enable him to deserve the appellation of MAN? *It is our decided impression and conviction, that to become a genuine spiritual entity, which that designation implies, man must first create himself anew, so to speak*—i.e., *thoroughly eliminate from his mind and spirit not only the dominating influence of selfishness and other impurity, but also the infection of superstition and prejudice.*

—H. P. BLAVATSKY

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THE THEOSOPHY COMPANY

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II *The study of ancient and modern religions, philosophies and sciences, and the demonstration of the importance of such study; and*

III *The investigation of the unexplained laws of Nature and the psychical powers latent in man.*

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AUM

Intelligence is impartial: no man is your enemy: no man is your friend. All alike are your teachers.

—*Light on the Path*

THEOSOPHY

VOLUME 67 AUGUST, 1979 NUMBER 10

WHAT IS SELF-KNOWLEDGE?

> If thou wouldst believe in the Power which acts within the root of a plant, or imagine the root concealed under the soil, thou hast to think of its stalk or trunk and of its leaves and flowers. Thou canst not imagine that Power independently of these objects. Life can be known only by the Tree of Life.
>
> *Precepts for Yoga*

IN this counsel we have a clue to what is involved in the pursuit of Self-Knowledge. Commenting, H.P.B. says: "The idea of *Absolute* Unity would be broken entirely on our conception, had we not something concrete before our eyes to contain that Unity." The world of concrete things in which we live is the region of illusion, yet at the same time the place where the longing for Self-Knowledge begins. The paradox is evident. The knowledge we seek is not of this world, yet it is found only by working in this world. As the *Voice* says:

> Shalt thou abstain from action? Not so shall gain thy soul her freedom. To reach Nirvana one must reach Self-Knowledge, and Self-Knowledge is of loving deeds the child.

How, then, does one perform loving deeds? The service of others is at once the simplest thing in the world and the subtlest of all undertakings. The spontaneous kindnesses that are natural to some human beings result from an attitude of mind. Little calculation is involved, but rather an innate feeling, at root a motive, in relations with others. Wise parents are perhaps the best example

of this. Always attentive to the needs of the children, such parents are continually balancing the wants of the child with actual needs, finding ways to meet the needs without indulging the wants. This intuitive wisdom helps the child in the formation of its character, just as a weak or indifferent parent places obstacles in the way of moral growth.

These are services well within the capacity of most people. Those who bear social or public responsibility are called upon to practice a wider understanding. Herbert Spencer gave indication of its dimensions in his suggestion that the statesman should continually ask himself: "What type of social structure am I tending to produce?" Involved, here, is a knowledge of human behavior in general at a given moment of history, and of the direction in which certain patterns of action are likely to lead. H.P.B. spoke in similar terms in a reply to a question about social efforts in behalf of the dispossessed. The Theosophist, she said, should do what he can to help such efforts along, and when asked how one might decide upon the merits of these programs she said that much must be left to individual judgment, but that one test could be applied:

> Will the proposed action tend to promote that true brotherhood which it is the aim of Theosophy to bring about? No real Theosophist will have much difficulty in applying such a test; once he is satisfied of this, his duty will lie in the direction of forming public opinion. And this can be attained only by inculcating those higher and nobler conceptions of public and private duties which lie at the root of all spiritual and material improvement. . . . In helping on the development of others, the Theosophist believes that he is not only helping them to fulfill their Karma, but that he is also, in the strictest sense, fulfilling his own. It is the development of humanity, of which both he and they are integral parts, that he has always in view, and he knows that any failure on his part to respond to the highest within him retards not only himself but all, in their progressive march. By his actions he can make it either more difficult or more easy for humanity to attain the next higher plane of being. (*Key to Theosophy*, pp. 235-36.)

Another comment on helping others suggests what self-knowledge will naturally include. This occurs in H.P.B.'s article, "Let Every Man Prove his own Work," in which she discusses the limitations of practical philanthropy. While in no way diminishing the importance of immediate aid to those in need, she points out that doing good on a social scale and in a systematic way requires

a special sort of knowledge, which is indeed a part of self-knowledge. Speaking of the experienced and perceptive philanthropist, she says:

> He sees that it takes a very wise man to do good works without danger of doing incalculable harm. A highly developed adept in life may grasp the nettle, and by his great intuitive powers, know whom to relieve from pain and whom to leave in the mire that is their best teacher. The poor and wretched themselves will tell anyone who is able to win their confidence what disastrous mistakes are made by those who come from a different class and endeavor to help them. Kindness and gentle treatment will sometimes bring out the worst qualities of a man or woman who has led a fairly presentable life when kept down by pain and despair. May the Master of Mercy forgive us for saying such words of any human creatures, all of whom are part of ourselves, according to the law of human brotherhood which no disowning of it can destroy. But the words are true. None of us know the darkness which lurks in the depths of our own natures until some strange and unfamiliar experience rouses the whole being into action. So with these others who seem more miserable than ourselves. . . . The social question as it is called, the great deep waters of misery, the deadly apathy of those who have power and possessions—these things are hardly to be faced by a generous soul who has not reached to the great idea of evolution, and who has not guessed at the marvelous mystery of human development.

Here, in effect, H.P.B. is speaking of the Halls through which the learner must pass, in the first two of which are endless deceptions. These must be transcended through knowledge of *what they are,* since one who would be the Knower of ALL SELF has first of Self to be the knower. Mr. Judge refers to this in another way early in his letters (XI):

> Each one would see the Self differently and yet would never see it, for to see it is to *be* it. But for making words we say, "See it." It might be a flash, a blazing wheel, or what not. Then there is the lower self, great in its way, and which must first be known. When first we see it, it is like looking into a glove, and for how many incarnations may it not be so? We look inside the glove and there is darkness; then we have to *go inside* and see that, and so on and on.

There is much in Mr. Judge's *Letters That Have Helped Me* for the seeker after Self-Knowledge to digest. If even so wise a man as Mr. Judge after trying to reach up to Brahma, found "but darkness about his pavilion," we may take consolation in this admission and see both encouragement and direction in what he suggests. His letters are a treatise on understanding the human heart in general.

The intellect is both a means and a barrier. It is a means in the sense that its use enables us to exhaust the experience of the planes of illusion. It is a barrier for the reason that, as Mr. Judge says, our knowledge *begins* with differentiation, and the Self is not a differentiation, but that which remains ever the same. Habituated as we are to seeking exactitude in definitions and calculations, we are betrayed into trying to think of the Self as though it had finite dimensions. Yet the Spirit, as Krishna declares, is not only indestructible and eternal, but *unprovable*.

Even so, there is a kind of Self-Knowledge of which Arjuna is already capable. We see this in the fact that Krishna admonishes him: since he knows that the Spirit in the body is "invisible, inconceivable, and unalterable," he should not grieve. One could say, then, that Self-Knowledge is present whenever one acts in the full realization that the Self is beyond what we speak of as "knowledge." In this we have in effect an illustration of the first four aphorisms in Book I of Patanjali, for to have this Knowledge would be through concentration to rise at will above all finite considerations. "Concentration or Yoga, is the hindering of the modifications of the thinking principle."

If, then, it is impossible to "think" our way to Self-knowledge, it may be natural to ask, Who or what is the thinker? In the reply given to this question by *The Secret Doctrine*, we have both challenge and encouragement. HP.B. says (II, 728): "That which lives and thinks in man and survives that frame, the masterpiece of evolution—is the 'Eternal Pilgrim,' the Protean differentiation in space and time of the One Absolute 'unknowable'." Can, one wonders, this "Eternal Pilgrim" be known, since it is a "differentiation"? Western psychological tradition would deny this possibility. With a considerable show of "brain-mind" logic, Herbert Spencer put the position clearly in his *First Principles*:

> The mental state in which self is known implies, like every other mental act, a perceiving subject and a perceived object. If then the object perceived is self, what is the subject that perceives? or if it is the true self which thinks, what other self can it be that is thought of? Clearly a true cognition of self implies a self in which the knowing and the known are one—in which subject and object are one; and this Mr. Mansel rightly holds to be the annihilation of both! So that the personality of which each is conscious, and of which the existence is to each a fact beyond all others the most certain, is yet a thing which cannot truly be known at all; the knowledge of it

is forbidden by the very nature of thought.

In her article, "Psychology: The Science of the Soul," H.P.B. quotes this passage from Spencer in order to show its flaw—a weakness apparent only in terms of occult metaphysics. To the question, "if it is the true self which thinks, what other self can it be that is thought of?", she replies in a footnote: "The Higher Self or Buddhi-Manas, which in the act of self-analysis or highest abstract thinking, partially reveals its presence and holds the subservient brain-consciousness in review."

At the end of this article, she addresses some questions to the believers in soul, who would maintain that molecular changes in the brain are caused by mental changes—a view which H.P.B. explains by saying, "Thought acts on the brain matter through the medium of Fohat focussed through one of the principles." She continues, asking:

> And what is it that presides so judicially over the mental changes? What is the *noumenon* of those mental phenomena which make up the external consciousness of the physical man? What is it which we recognize as the terrestrial "self" and which —monists and materialists notwithstanding—does control and regulate the flow of its own mental states? No occultist would for a moment deny that the materialistic theory as to the relations of mind and brain is in its way expressive of the truth that the *superficial* brain-consciousness or "phenomenal self" is bound up for all practical purposes with the integrity of the cerebral matter. This brain-consciousness or personality is mortal, being but a distorted reflection through a physical basis of the manasic self. It is an instrument for harvesting experience for the Buddhi-Manas or monad, and saturating it with the aroma of consciously-acquired experience. But for all that the "brain-self" is real while it lasts, and weaves its Karma as a responsible entity. Esoterically explained it is the consciousness inhering in that lower portion of the Manas which is correlated with the physical brain. (Pamphlet, *Theosophical Psychology*.)

This illuminating statement makes a fine introduction to her treatment of this subject in "Psychic and Noetic Action," where she says:

> *There is no special organ of will.* any more than there is a *physical basis* for the activities of self-consciousness. . . .
>
> Thus, the whole conclave of psycho-physiologists may be challenged to correctly define Consciousness, and they are sure to fail, because Self-Consciousness belongs alone to man and proceeds from the SELF, the higher Manas. Only, whereas the

> psychic element (or *Kama-manas*) is common to both the animal and the human being—the far higher development in the latter resting merely on the greater perfection and sensitiveness of his cerebral cells—no physiologist, not even the cleverest, will ever be able to solve the mystery of the human mind, in its highest spiritual manifestation, or in its dual aspect of the *psychic* and *noetic* (or the *manasic*), or even to comprehend the intricacies of the former on the purely material plane—unless he knows something of, and is prepared to admit the presence of this dual element. This means that he would have to admit a lower (animal), and a higher (or divine) mind in man, or what is known in Occultism as the "personal" and the "impersonal" *Egos*. For between the *psychic* and the *noetic*, between the *personality* and the *individuality*, there exists the same abyss as between a "Jack the Ripper," and a holy Buddha. Unless the physiologist accepts all this. we say, he will ever be led into a quagmire.

It is of more than passing interest that H.P.B. provided these insights into the question of self-knowledge, and how it may be answered, mainly in arguments contesting the prevailing materialistic doctrines. She wrote no lengthy treatise on Psychology, as such, although, actually, her entire works deal directly or indirectly with this subject. H.P.B. came to the world as a great reformer. Her primary effort was to change the current and level of thinking in the human race. She gave some instruction and threw out hints, knowing that her readers would have to work out these matters for themselves, by applying her suggestions and turning them into realizations independently gained. She dealt with the mind of the race as she found it, using both its true perceptions and its opacities and mistakes as the raw materials of her labors. Her work as a Teacher was in the grain of the thinking of nineteenth- and twentieth-century mankind.

Fundamentally, however, her method was Platonic. She began, as *The Secret Doctrine* begins, with highly abstract first principles, gradually demonstrating their consequences and effects in human experience, and showing how, once those first principles are relied upon, Theosophy has indeed an answer to every question. Her object, so far as "thinking" goes, was to enable us to work toward a sense of reality for the great philosophical abstractions of the occult teaching. Speaking, early in the first volume (p. 64), of the primordial beginning of manifestation, she gives an explanation of a portion of Stanza III:

> The solitary ray dropping into the mother deep may be taken

> as meaning Divine Thought or Intelligence, impregnating chaos. This, however, occurs on the plane of metaphysical abstraction, or rather the plane whereon that which we call a metaphysical abstraction is a reality.

To help us in thinking of this sort of reality, we are given various symbols—geometrical and living—by which the mind becomes accustomed (through the use of analogue and correspondence) to reflect at this rarefied level. In time, the brain is made porous and the intellect begins to feel at home with abstract ideas. Such thinking may open the way to intuition. But a great deal of abstract thinking is required to wear away the habits and expectations of Western intellectuality, by which we have been instructed for generations. The sense of security obtained from devising precise answers to finite problems—the scientific method and its logic—must begin to have replacement by the invitations which come from higher Manas. This may be illustrated by the way in which E. F. Schumacher deals with what he calls "divergent" and "convergent" problems. "Convergent problems," he said, "relate to the *dead* aspect of the Universe, where manipulation can proceed without let or hindrance and where man can make himself 'master and possessor,' because the subtle, higher forces—which we have labeled life, consciousness, and self-awareness are not present to complicate matters." These are the problems we feel "comfortable" with, because they can be solved. They deal with finite matters. The other sort of problems, the divergent ones, are questions which are never completely settled. They have to do with good and evil, right and wrong, and matters in which some aspect of the eternal or immortal side of man enters. Our capacity to deal with these divergent problems—how to help our children grow—how to meet the dilemmas of war and peace—how to plan education and how to deal with crime—does not depend upon careful measurements and strict logical analysis, but on the degree of self-knowledge with which we approach them. In all great questions there is an incommensurable factor which cannot be contained or manipulated. These are the questions which life itself addresses to the soul, and which we cannot deal with wisely unless leadings from the higher nature guide our attempts. These leadings are self-knowledge. We may recognize its presence, sometimes, when we see it in operation, but it has no explanation in familiar terms.

Its reality and the hope self-knowledge affords for the human race are the chief burden of the teaching of Theosophy.

CONCERNING THE WILL

THE Will receives but little direct treatment in the writings of H. P. Blavatsky or William Q. Judge. The reason for this is hinted at in the Preface to *The Ocean of Theosophy*:

> The subject of the Will has received no treatment, inasmuch as that power or faculty is hidden, subtle, undiscoverable as to essence, and only visible in effect. As it is absolutely colorless and varies in moral quality in accordance with the desire behind it, as also it acts frequently without our knowledge, and as it operates in all the kingdoms below man, there could be nothing gained by attempting to inquire into it apart from the Spirit and the desire.

By this statement Mr. Judge serves notice upon readers of his book that they will find in it only Theosophical philosophy and ethics; if interested in the development of "powers" they had better look elsewhere. The method adopted by all True Teachers was, first, responsibility, and *only then*, power. To reverse this programme and to develop power first leads to black magic, and may mean the ruin of the student, to say nothing of the great harm done others through the irresponsible and selfish use of power. The secret of Will and its arousal is wrapped up with the study of Theosophy itself, and in fact, parallels that study.

In this respect the study of the Wisdom-Religion differs from all other studies. In other systems of thought, the goal is reached in the formulation of the doctrines, speculations or theories; and the interest of the scholar is of a detached nature. He seeks chiefly to satisfy intellectual curiosity and once satisfied he either rests content or else looks about for further intellectual fields to conquer. For the occultist, knowledge is alive. He is himself the essence of knowledge and every part of his nature is deeply affected as the great truths of Theosophy begin to dawn on him. Any study of Theosophy which fails to arouse the Will, never rises above an intellectual and exoteric comprehension.

A statement on the Will similar to the one in the Preface of the *Ocean* is to be found in the Preface to Mr. Judge's Interpretation

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NOTE.—This article is reprinted from THEOSOPHY, Vol. 19.

of the *Yoga Aphorisms of Patanjali*. This may be surprising to many students since they associate the subject of concentration with methods for the development of the Will, leading to the acquisition of abnormal powers. Mr. Judge disillusions such students and shows that the Aphorisms are really rules and precepts for soul-growth. From this Preface:

> There is no reference in the Aphorisms to the will. It seems to be inferred, either as well understood and admitted, or as being one of the powers of soul itself and not to be discussed. Many old Hindu writers hold, and we incline to the same view, that Will is a spiritual power, function or attribute constantly present in every portion of the Universe. It is a colorless power, to which no quality of goodness or badness is to be assigned, but which may be used in whatever way man pleases. When considered as that which in ordinary life is called "will," we see its operation only in connection with the material body and mind guided by desire; looked at in respect to the hold by man upon life it is more recondite, because its operation is beyond the ken of the mind; analyzed as connected with reincarnation of man or with the persistence of the manifestel universe throughout a Manvantara, it is found to be still more removed from our comprehension and vast in its scope.
>
> In ordinary life, it is not man's servant, but, being then guided solely by desire, it makes man a slave to his desires. Hence the old cabalistic maxim, "Behind Will stands Desire." The desires always drawing the man hither and thither, cause him to commit such actions and have such thoughts as form the cause and mould for numerous reincarnations, enslaving him to a destiny against which he rebels, and that constantly destroys and re-creates his mortal body. It is an error to say of those who are known as strong-willed men, that their wills are wholly their servants, for they are so bound in desire that it, being strong, moves the will into action for the consummation of wished for ends. Every day we see good and evil men prevailing in their several spheres. To say that in one there is good, and in the other evil will is manifestly erroneous and due to mistaking will, the instrument or force, for desire that sets it in motion toward a good or bad purpose. But Patanjali and his school well knew that the secret of directing the will with ten times the ordinary force might be discovered if they outlined the method, and then bad men whose desires were strong and conscience wanting, would use it with impunity against their fellows; or that even sincere students might be carried away from spirituality when dazzled by the wonderful results flowing from a training of the will alone. Patanjali is silent upon the subject for this reason among others.

A statement of the relation of the Will to Concentration is contained in the last paragraph of an article by Mr. Judge, entitled: "Meditation, Concentration, Will" (THEOSOPHY IX, 3):

> No mere practice will develop will *per se,* for its exists forever, fully developed in itself. But practice will develop in us the power to call on that will which is ours. Will and Desire lie at the doors of Meditation and Concentration. If we desire truth with the same intensity that we had formerly wished for success, money, or gratification, we will speedily acquire meditation and possess concentration. If we do all our acts, small and great, every moment, for the sake of the whole human race, as representing the Supreme Self, then every cell and fibre of the body and inner man will be turned in one direction, resulting in perfect concentration. This is expressed in the New Testament in the statement that if the eye is single the whole body will be full of light, and in the Bhagavad-Gita it is still more clearly and comprehensively given through the different chapters. In one it is beautifully put as the lighting up in us of the Supreme One, who then becomes visible. Let us meditate on that which is in us as the Highest Self, concentrate upon it, and will to work for it as dwelling in every human heart.

In Mr. Judge's Notes to the First Chapter of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, there is another comment on the Will. The ultimate results of the higher, or altruistic, and the lower, or personal, uses of the Will are graphically set forth:

> It has been said in some Theosophical writings of the present day, that a "spiritualized will" ought to be cultivated. As terms are of the highest importance we ought to be careful how we use them, for in the inner life they represent either genuine regulated forces, or useless and abortive things that lead to nothing but confusion. This term "spiritualized will" leads to errors, because in fact it has no existence. The mistake has grown out of the constant dwelling on "will" and "forces" needed for the production of phenomena, as something the disciple should strive to obtain—whether so confessed or not—while the real motive power is lost sight of. It is very essential that we should clearly understand this, for if we make the blunder of attributing to *will* or to any other faculty an action which it does not have, or of placing it in a plane to which it does not belong, we at once remove ourselves far from the real knowledge, since all action on this plane is by mind alone.
>
> The old Hermetic statement is: *"Behind will stands desire,"* and it is true.
>
> *Will* is a pure, colorless force which is moved into action by

desire. If desire does not give a direction the will is motionless; and just as desire indicates, so the will proceeds to execute.

But as there are countless wills of sentient beings constantly plying to and fro in our sphere, and must be at all times in some manner acting upon one another, the question arises, what is that sort of knowledge, which shows how to use the will so that the effect of counteracting will may not be felt. That knowledge is lost among the generality of men and is only instinctive here and there in the world as a matter of Karmic result, giving us examples of men whose will seems to lead them on to success, as Jay Gould and others.

Furthermore, men of the world are not desiring to see results which shall be in accord with the general will of nature, because they are wanting this and that for their own benefit. Their desire, then, no matter how strong, is limited or nullified: (1) by lack of knowledge of how to counteract other wills; (2) by being in opposition to the general will of nature without the other power of being able to act strongly in opposition to that too.

So it follows—as we see in practice in life—*that men obtain only a portion of that which they desire.*

The question next arises: Can a man go against the general will of nature and escape destruction, and also be able to desire wickedly with knowledge and accomplish, through will, what he wishes?

Such a man can do all of these—except to escape destruction. That is sure to come, no matter at how remote a period.

He acquires extraordinary knowledge, enabling him to use powers for selfish purposes during immense periods of time, but at last the insidious effects of the opposition to the general true will makes itself felt and he is destroyed forever.

This fact is the origin of the destruction-of-worlds-myths, and of those myths of combats such as between Krishna and Ravana, the demon god, and between Durga and the demons.

For in other ages, as is to again occur in ages to come, these wickedly desiring people, having great knowledge, increase to an enormous extent and threaten the stability of the world. Then the adherents of the good law can no longer quietly work on humanity, but come out in force, and a fight ensues in which the black magicians are always destroyed, because the good Adepts possess not only equal knowledge with the bad ones, but have in addition the great assistance of the general will of nature which is not in control of the others, and so it is inevitable that the good should triumph always. This assistance is also the heritage of every true student, and may be invoked by the real disciple when he has arrived at and passed the first abyss.

A further exposition by W. Q. Judge on the nature of the true Will is to be found, reprinted in THEOSOPHY III, 435:

> What is the true Will?
>
> Is it a faculty of the soul?
>
> How is it one with the Divine Will and how may we make our will at one with the Divine? Is it something which now we know not, or may we perceive its germ in our own Will, or is it an instinctive movement of the soul?
>
> *Answer.*—The will as known to man is that force which he exerts for the accomplishment of his aims—he uses it blindly and ignorantly—and self is always the one for which he uses it. It is used as a brute force. As ordinarily used it has little tendency to lift the personality farther than the attainment of material results. It has for it source, the lower elements of the soul. The true will is a concentrated force working steadily yet gently, dominating both soul and person, having its source in the spirit and highest elements of the soul. It is never used for the gratification of self, is inspired by the highest of motives, it is never interposed to violate a law, but works in harmony with the unseen as well as the seen. It is manifested through the human will for things visible.
>
> (2.) It is more than a faculty of the soul, for it is the soul at work. The spirit is unmanifest except through the soul. The soul manifesting the spirit is the true will. The human will is the lowest form of this manifestation.
>
> (3.) As the true will is the manifestation of the spirit through the soul, it must be at one with the divine, inasmuch as the spirit is the divine in man. It is the God in man, a portion of the all-pervading. Asserting itself through the soul, the true will is brought forth and in truth we say, "It is the will of God." We may make our finite wills at one with the divine by elevating our aim, using it for good or in the search for God, in striving to find how to use it in harmony with the laws of God. By proper use in the right direction the human will becomes purified, elevated, and being exerted only in conformity with our highest ideal, eventually becomes at one with the highest in man.
>
> In our ordinary material state we know only the human will. Through the human will we reach the divine will. We become aware of the true will through the ordinary will just as we become aware of the soul through the body. It is not instinctive of the soul. The soul is father of the human will—the spirit is father of the true will.

Through all of these extracts from the writings of William Q. Judge runs a single motif: Purify and elevate the desires first.

Kill out all ambition so that living and striving for private, personal ends becomes unthinkable. Become a co-worker with the eternally beneficent *Forces* in Nature, and then you will come gradually into the possession of the Key to the mysteries of Nature and of Man—the WILL of the TRUE MAGICIAN.

THE ASTRAL LIGHT

The ether of occult science. Lowest plane of the Hindu akasa. The World-Soul, that out of which all visible manifested nature proceeds. Akasa is the fine substance out of which is spun and constructed every visible form and invisible being. The action of the Purusha or spirit in the akasa produces the manifested universe. The astral light is the sphere of akasa nearest our physical earth. Therefore, the playground of unseen forces producing all the growths and movements and evolution of the vegetable and other kingdoms. Efficient comprehension of the astral light and its properties enables the seer to understand all the workings of nature. Dangerous because also the receptacle of mind forces and conscious and subconscious thoughts. Mediums influenced by its forces liable to lose mental grip. True occultist will never allow any astral power to overcome his intelligence. Clairvoyants not psychics, not possessed of occult power or union with the Supreme, utterly untrustworthy. Astral light has two phases; looked at from above, seen aright looked at from below, all powers and elemental beings and sights inverted. Theosophists inclined to dabble in mediumship and desiring sight-seeing should remember the statement of H.P.B. that some of the highest occultists never look into the astral light at all; they would not degrade themselves by passing into that region. The sphere of evil thoughts and desires. The abode of elemental and nature spirits. The sphere of disintegrating "shells," elementaries, spooks, earthbound souls; looked at from the physical sphere of ordinary human life, the degrader of intelligence and the soul. Aim of the student to get rid of its influence. All men, save occultists, influenced by it more or less. One aim of Theosophy to instruct men in coming age of psychism to avoid astral influences. This is done by giving the real philosophy of Astral Light. Hence Theosophists should study carefully the doctrine, but not experiment in these regions.

—*The Theosophical Forum*

THE LAW OF RETARDATION

LET us premise first that there exists in all nture and in every organism the *tendency to repeat* any action once performed; second, that there exists in every form of consciousness the *power to change* any action or course of action. These two distinctions of consciousness and form are the essential duality behind all manifestation that is expressed in the words Spirit and Matter.

No organism has any intelligence or any power of action in itself; it is a product, an effect, not a cause. The body is not self-illuminative, neither is the mind; neither, it may be added, are any or all of the "principles" in man or in Nature. The *power* to initiate action, or to change action, or to perceive the results of action lies in the Consciousness and not in the form: in Spirit, not in Matter.

But every organism of any kind or quality is itself composed of forms of consciousness or "Lives," each with its own radius of perception, initiation of action, and ability to change—all held together in some sort of unison of action and coherence of direction by the power of a superior Life which uses the combination as a vehicle or instrument for its own action in a wider radius than it could achieve singly and alone.

The simile of an army, with its commanding general, its officers, private soldiers and greater or less degree of discipline, is an exact illustration of the nature of every organism, great or small. Man is an organism in which the Ego is the commanding general, and his different principles or sheaths is his army with its divisions and rank-and-file drawn from every order of intelligence, every form of consciouness and action possible in this solar system. The Masters are Egos who have put their army in a state of perfect discipline and control, and are therefore capable of instant and supreme power of action in any direction, on any plane of being.

The human being has not yet succeeded in disciplining his army. He has all the necessary elements in his organism, but he is sure neither of himself nor of his army. He lacks, first and foremost,

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NOTE.—This article is reprinted from THEOSOPHY, Vol. 9.

confidence in himself, and secondly, knowledge of what to do and how to do it. In other words, he is as yet exactly as far from having a real army as he is far from being a real general. He has the command, he has the power, for he and none other has summoned his levies from the six directions in space; but he is by turns bold and timid, resolute and vacillating, too severe and too lax.

It is clear that the individual entities composing the "army" or nature, or principles, or bodies of man, have each their own integrity, but it should be equally clear that the "army" has not summoned itself, and as such has no initiative, no power of any kind, save as instigated and directed by Man and the Ego, the general.

The teachings of Theosophy are the science of war, which includes the formation, organization and disciplining of armies, as well as the use to which that army is to be put when ready for war. The student is the Ego learning and fitting himself to be a true General, and he has been engaged in this task for countless lives, and has made some progress, but he has made many mistakes, and these are reflected in the habits, tendencies and qualities of his army.

No one can overcome these but himself. And he has to remember that none but a very few of his soldiers have intelligence enough to be entirely plastic and obedient to his instructions, directions, and orders. They all have desires of their own, ambitions of their own, ideas of their own, which run counter to his purposes and are destructive of all true discipline from the army standpoint. If left to themselves they will run riot, become wholly insubordinate, and at last disintegrate.

Of course he could kill his rebellious soldiers, but if he did that they would be of no use in his army, and he needs them, every one, if his army is to be complete; and it must be complete if he is to be supreme on his field of battle. What he has to do is to kill out those practices and tendencies in his soldiers which are subversive of discipline. Only he can do that.

His efforts are retarded by the ignorance, the lack of *morale,* the acquired characteristics of the component elements of his soldiery; by his own mistaken tactics in the past, by his lack of firmness in enforcing obedience to his will. They constitute together the two great obstacles in his path: the inertia in the individual soldiers; the rebellious and seditious elements in his minor subdivisions.

Confidence in himself; confidence in his ability to learn and apply the science of war; *action* from these two bases is the trinity that will make of the human being a Master of his army.

The longer we delay, the more we procrastinate and try to hire or bribe or coax some one else to do our work for us, the more our army becomes unmanageable. The more we listen to the clamor of the soldiery, the more we yield to their infractions of discipline, the harder will be our task. The more we shirk or shrink from study and effort, the greater the mountain of inertia to be overcome.

Many lives already we have had to die, that is, disband our army, without accomplishing the great task. Something we have learned, but the two great things we have not yet learned; *resolution*—confidence in our ability and purpose—and *work*—sustained effort to learn and to apply our teaching. To learn these two things demands *self*-discipline. Exactly as each general disciplines himself will he find his army amenable to discipline. For Nature, everywhere and inviolably, is an *ordre pour la merite*.

MAGIC

Ous Society believes in *no miracle*, diabolical or human, nor in anything which eludes the grasp of either philosophical and logical induction, or the syllogistic method of deduction. But if the corrupted and comparatively modern term of "Magic" is understood to mean the higher study and knowledge of Nature and deep research into her hidden powers—those Occult and mysterious laws which constitute the ultimate essence of every element—or, again, if by Magic is meant that ancient study within the sanctuaries, known as the "worship of the Light," or divine and spiritual wisdom—as distinct from the worship of darkness or ignorance—then, we Theosophists "plead guilty."

—H. P. BLAVATSKY, 1879

"THE GITA"—INFORMAL ESSAYS

VI

IT has occasionally been suggested that one of the most rewarding ways to study the *Gita* is to attempt, in reading, to isolate a few key passages, study their philosophical implications over a considerable period of time, and then try to relate the result in "fundamentals" to the rest of Krishna's teaching. Some of the most important passages in the *Gita,* however, are obscure—as most profound things must sometimes seem. Take for example the sentence occurring in the first part of Chapter Six, which is entitled, "Devotion by Means of Self-Restraint." Krishna tells Arjuna that "no one without having previously renounced all intentions can be devoted."

The meaning of devotion is clear enough, for Krishna says there is only one true devotion—that which is devoted to the Supreme Spirit. Since the Supreme Spirit resides in all things, this seems to mean that one must develop an attitude of devotion *to* All Things. Yet, how are we to follow out our devotion for the beings and creatures who move around us unless we seek to assist those who need our assistance? And does this not mean that we shall *intend* to succeed in our efforts of help?

The answer to this paradox must lie in a recognition that this Fire of the Supreme Spirit burns, in all, as the integrity of free choice. How can we be "devoted" to anyone, in the sense Krishna means, if we focus our attention upon some particular accomplishment we should like the object of our attention to achieve? It must be that by recognizing and being devoted to *the free will of another,* we best serve him.

Our "intentions" are usually of a very different nature. They are commonly centered around the desire to reward our friends and punish our enemies. Yet, in the simplest of psychological situations, we certainly must realize that we can sometimes demonstrate our friendship most usefully when we disagree with our friend —and perhaps side with our enemies against him—if at that particular moment a specific position of the "enemy" seems more defensible from the standpoint of impartial justice. Thus Krishna says:

NOTE.—This is the last of a series of articles which were originally printed in THEOSOPHY, Volumes 38 and 39.

> And he is esteemed among all who, whether amongst his friends and companions, in the midst of enemies or those who stand aloof or remain neutral, with those who love and those who hate, and in the company of sinners or the righteous, is of equal mind.

"Renouncing all intentions" can only mean, in Krishna's context, reliance upon the law of self-determination. We cannot *make* our enemies good nor our friends better. But since it is the absence of a perception of the law of self-determination which makes some men evil and the perception of the law of self-determination which makes others good, we can only assist by demonstrating our own "supreme devotion" to that principle. In so doing we afford an opportunity for the further enlightenment of both "friends and enemies."

Though the above may seem an over-simplification, we shall find ample justification for such an idea in reviewing the course of history, if we pay particular attention to the characteristics of the men we revile as "tyrants" or praise as "benefactors." Those who exert a liberating influence upon their fellows, who believe above all things in the principle of "self-determination," are the true Liberators of history. Tyrants are tyrannical to the degree that they *reject* the same principle.

With these considerations in mind, we are perhaps prepared to understand the developments of the "Golden Mean" philosophy, which many people hope will keep them away from difficulty. But Krishna intends something more than the conventional "Golden Mean" doctrine when he suggests Moderation. Moderation in the use of our faculties does not prevent us from fully entering into any action when required, although we must refrain from dissipating our "devotion" by focussing it on a *particular* aim. A simile may exist in physics: the electrical force produced by a huge generator can be grounded out on a single circuit and thus dissipated, instead of bringing light to many streets and dwellings. Similarly, the man who sets his mind on a certain result can "ground" the energies which need to be held ready for truly important action.

How easy it is for us to equate "regulation" and "discipline"—even careful moderation—with the cessation of happiness. Yet "impersonality" is necessary for perception of beauty, just as it is for truth—and happiness flows from the knowing of beauty, does it not? Do we ever feel we know the ultimates of beauty or happi-

ness when we are tangibly enmeshed in a situation, swept powerfully along by an emotion? Often when we are in solitude our perceptive faculties are able to achieve the balance which lets us fully and deeply experience. Sometimes—often—we feel our deepest love for a person, a family, or for all men, when we are not in anyone's physical presence. So discipline and happiness, restraint and beauty, meditation and love, need not be enemies, but are truly friends.

We have heard that the impartiality of the scientist is a superior quality, difficult of attainment, yet richly rewarding. To move towards the Truth, it seems, to select the most fruitful hypothesis, we must consciously strive to rid ourselves of all bias. To see clearly, we must, in other words, stand apart from the thing to be seen. And is not the impersonality of the great artist, during creation, the same thing as the impartiality of the scientist?

All men, of course, even when they are scientists or artists, live personal lives. Sometimes the price of holding an impersonal quality of mind during creative work is a bursting of all bonds of restraint when work is not in progress. At least this may have something to do with the legendary excesses of "artists." But the reactive emotional states, tending to intrude after periods of excessive discipline, are not really productive of either beauty or happiness—because they are not creative. Krishna is saying that all true creativity must invoke the Supreme Spirit—must, in other words, be dedicated to All that Lives rather than to any one specific object. "Devotion to The Supreme Spirit" *is* the impartiality of the scientist, the impersonality of the artist, and the *creative detachment* of every man who earns beauty and happiness through his depth of perception. Somewhere and somehow, Krishna implies, is to be found a state of mind which can lead "even the mere inquirer beyond the word of the Vedas." It is apparently the attitude of Meditation, for "the man of meditation, as thus described, is superior to the man of penance, and to the man of learning, and also to the man of action; wherefore, O Arjuna, resolve thou (first) to become a man of meditation." Is this but another way of saying, "Seek ye first the kingdom of Heaven, and thereafter all things will be added unto you"? Certainly, in a soul-evolving universe, all of us must become "men of action," "men of learning" and even, perhaps, "men of penance." But *to prepare ourselves* we must come to know truly and clearly—through detachment. Is such counsel

an unnatural doctrine of repression? It easily can become such, so prone are we all to wish for the abrupt, oversimplified solutions which do not require us to strain over the balancing of complex subtleties. Oversimplification is "the word of the Vedas"—the word and the doctrinal aspect of every formal religion. But behind the Word is the great truth of Synthesis, the knowledge that the truly strict and the truly free are one and the same, and that the flagellant is not one step closer than the sensualist to perceiving things aright. If discipline and freedom are to be balanced in us, we may need to know more of "the doctrine of detachment." It must become apparent to honestly reflective minds that our undue involvement in emotional states is always a kind of temporary insanity which obscures not only the truth—but the worth and beauty of the very situations we find ourselves in. Yet our aim need not be to leave life—rather can it be to *truly live* life, entering into all circumstances with the greater strength and power of the man whose attitude is fixed on universal potentiality. rather than upon the exploitative possibilities of the specific moment.

DESIRE MADE PURE

When desire is for the purely abstract—when it has lost all trace or tinge of "self"—then it has become pure.

The first step towards this purity is to kill out the desire for the things of matter, since these *can* only be enjoyed by the separated personality.

The second is to cease from desiring for oneself even such abstractions as power, knowledge, love, happiness, or fame; for they are but selfishness after all.

Life itself teaches these lessons; for all such objects of desire are found Dead Sea fruit in the moment of attainment. This much we learn from experience. Intuitive perception seizes on the *positive* truth that satisfaction is attainable only in the infinite; the will makes that conviction an actual fact of consciousness, till at last all desire is centered on the Eternal.

—*Lucifer*

letters • questions • comment

What is the best way to distinguish between the Theosophic teaching of Devachan and the Christian idea of heaven? It is said that the devachanic experience of a devout Christian would take the form of an orthodox Christian "heaven."

The key to this question is given in the comment which follows it. Christian belief, while by no means uniform, involves description of a condition which is enjoyed by those who gain salvation. The Theosophic conception of Devachan is an explanation of how the principal state after death is shaped by previous belief during life, of which the Christian belief is an instance or example. If one turns to reference books concerning Christian teaching, one is soon lost in the complexities of theological theories and argument, it becoming apparent that there is no generally accepted "orthodoxy" with respect to heaven or heavenly rewards, although the conviction of immortality is commonly present among Christians. The effect of these numerous differences of opinion was well put by a Christian scholar Dr. James Orr, at the end of the last century:

> The conclusion I arrive at is that we have not the elements of a complete solution and we ought not to attempt it. What visions beyond there may be, what larger hopes, what ultimate harmonies, if such there are in store, will come in God's good time; it is not for us to anticipate them, or lift the veil where God has left it down. (*Encyclopædia Britannica*, *"Eschatology."*)

This learned skepticism or modesty, however, has little affect on the actual beliefs of the great mass of Christians, which may be intense and vivid in imagery. It is these beliefs which shape the devachanic vision or dream. Devachan is always the product of beliefs, and when there are no beliefs there can be no Devachan, no "Heaven." This "first principle" concerning the states after death is given in the *Key to Theosophy*:

> One who has no inner perception of, and faith in, the immortality of his soul, in that man the soul can never become Buddhi-Taijasi, but will remain simply Manas, and for Manas alone there is no immortality possible. In order to live in the world to come a conscious life, one has to believe first of all in that life during the terrestrial existence. On these two aphorisms of the

Secret Science all the philosophy about the post-mortem consciousness and the immortality of the soul is built. (Pp. 164-65.)

H.P.B. continues:

> After death, before the spiritual eyes of the soul, begins a performance according to a program learnt and very often unconsciously composed by ourselves: the practical carrying out of *correct* beliefs or of illusions which have been created by ourselves. The Methodist will be a Methodist, the Mussulman a Mussulman, at least for some time—in a perfect fool's paradise of each man's creation. These are the post-mortem fruits of the tree of life. Naturally, our belief or unbelief in the fact of conscious immortality is unable to influence the unconditioned reality of the fact itself, once that is exists; but the belief or unbelief in that immortality cannot fail to give colour to that fact in its application to each of these entities.

A little later, to leave no doubt of her meaning, H.P.B. adds:

> He who expected no life to come will have an absolute blank, amounting to annihilation, in the interval between the two rebirths. . . . A selfish, wicked Egoist, one who never shed a tear for anyone but himself, thus adding entire indifference to the whole world to his unbelief, must, at the threshold of death, drop his personality forever. This personality having no tendrils of sympathy for the world around and hence nothing to hook on to Sutratma, it follows that with the last breath every connection between the two is broken. There being no Devachan for such a materialist, the Sutratma will reincarnate almost immediately. But those materialists who erred in nothing but their disbelief will oversleep but one station. And the time will come when that ex-materialist will perceive himself in the Eternity and perhaps repent that he lost even one day, one station, from the life eternal.

As for all the rest, most of whom are believers in some form of immortality, the state of Devachan (as a contributor to the *Path* put it), "is an ideal paradise; in each case of the ego's own making, and by him filled with the scenery, crowded with incidents, and thronged with the people he would expect to find in such a sphere of comparative bliss." A graphic description of various possibilities follows:

> A mother from a savage tribe is not less happy than a mother from a royal palace, with her lost child in her arms; and altho', as actual Egos, children prematurely dying before the perfection of their septenary entity do not find their way to Devachan, yet all the same, the mother's loving fancy finds her children there without one missing that her heart yearns for. Say it is but a dream, but, after all, what is objective life itself but

> a panorama of vivid unrealities? The pleasure realized by a Red Indian in his "happy hunting grounds" in that land of dreams is not less intense than the ecstasy felt by a connoisseur who passes æons in the rapt delight of listening to divine symphonies by imaginary angelic choirs and orchestras. As it is no fault of the former if born a "savage" with an instinct to kill—tho' it caused the death of many an innocent animal—why, if with it all he was a loving father, son, husband, why should he not also enjoy *his* share of reward? The case would be quite different if the same cruel acts had been done by an educated and civilized person, from a mere love of sport. The savage in being reborn would simply take a low place in the scale, by reason of his imperfect moral development; while the Karma of the other would be tainted with moral delinquency. . . . (THEOSOPHY 1:502.)

A question remains. In the passage quoted from the *Key*, H.P.B. says that the experience of Devachan is "the carrying out of *correct* beliefs or of illusions which have been created by ourselves." What is the meaning of "correct" beliefs? It seems reasonable to say that it means belief in the Theosophical teaching concerning the after-death states. Since this teaching calls the experience of the Devachanic state an "illusion," one might think that the individual who has taken these metaphysical doctrines seriously, and has adopted the ideas of psycho-dynamics given, would find the grip of the illusion lessened by the power of his reflections during life. Such an one, if devoted to the cause of Theosophy, might well qualify for the "immediate rebirth" earned by those "who are always working with their hearts on Master's work and free from self-interest." (*Letters That Have Helped Me*, p. 9.) In his article, "Conversations with H.P.B.," Mr. Judge reported what she said to him about Devachan:

> "Well. Judge, you must know well that under the philosophy we don't all stay there so long. It varies with the character of each. A thoroughly material thinker will emerge sooner than one who is a spiritual philosopher and good. Besides, recollect that all workers for the Lodge, no matter of what degree, are helped out of Devachan if they themselves permit it. Your own idea which you have stated that 1500 years had not elapsed since you went into Devachan, is correct, and that I tell is what Master himself tells me. So there you are." (Pamphlet No. 10, p. 2.)

on the lookout

Outdoing Pollyanna

Disdaining to notice current statistics on suicide, alcoholism, drug abuse, and other signs of the times, a writer in *House and Garden* for last December finds the population of the United States ready for a cycle of "optimism," declaring:

> Contrary to what most people believe, there is no population explosion; no energy crisis, no shortage of resources; pollution is not as bad as we think it is. Experts in many fields all agree that the 1980s hold the most tremendous possibilities of hope and achievement for everyone. . . . It is generally accepted that we are more aware, more open, more confident than we were ten years ago. . . . We've changed a lot. Though much still needs to be done, our air and water are cleaner. We have reacted positively to confusing situations. Public opinion helped to stop a war, and our strength as a nation brought us through Watergate and the near impeachment of a president. We've told the establishment that they can't with impunity build nuclear plants or tear down Grand Central Station, that something must be done to revise the tax structure.

This writer, Maeve Slavin, quotes an anthropologist who believes that the most notable accomplishment by the American people during the 1970s was that "we successfully brought up our children, perhaps the largest crop of kids ever born, in apparently healthy ways, physically and psychologically."

Happiness a Chemical Achievement

The excellences claimed for the status quo pale in comparison with anticipations of the almost immediate future:

> We took a "giant step for man" and have developed our technology to the point where colonization of the limitless outer spaces will be feasible in the eighties. Scientists say that late in the decade people will be living and working in space, either on hospitable planets—there are more than a hundred million earth-type planets in the universe—or in space stations. . . . Computers have revolutionized our thinking apparatus. Data banks, like savings accounts, store increasingly vast amounts of information which, in the eighties, any home television set can plug into.

While other writers interpret at least some of this "evidence" of good times as indicating that the human species seems blindly disaster-prone, the *House and Garden* contributor quotes authorities like the Hudson Institute to the effect that the strength and resilience in the American system makes the long-term prognosis "very good." And Dr. Lionel Tiger, an anthropologist, seems to think that the optimism justified by so many comforting benefits in the present is lacking by reason of body chemistry, which may not be functioning properly. "The neurophysicology of it, possibly, is that the brain secretes its own optimism-producing opiates," he says, and he recalls the prediction of Sigmund Freud "that eventually central understanding of human behavior would depend on knowledge of the chemical transaction occurring in the brain and the rest of the body." Reliance on even "home-made" opiates seems an odd view of psychic well-being!

Mounting Abuses

The extreme externality of all these arguments in behalf of optimism requires notice. We should be happy, it is said, because of our technical "achievements." And if present felicity is not enough, then what "experts hold" and "scientists say" about the promise of the future should satisfy the most anxious soul. Even our opinions, these days, are admirable, despite our inability to make them effective. And if these grounds for happiness and optimism are not sufficient, perhaps a biochemical will help us to see the light. Other commentators are less sanguine. Wondering why, according to a Gallup poll, "58 per cent of American teenagers believe the world will be a worse place to live in another 10 years," Charles Bartlett, a columnist in the *Washington Star* (April 10, 1978), pursues a more searching inquiry:

> It may be that the young are being prematurely disillusioned by their discovery that life in an unstructured society, with all its freedom for the individual, has cheapening aspects that are depressing. The drug culture, the pornography on the newsstands, the spread of crime into all elements of the population, the excesses of an unfettered sexual code and the toughness of people who used to be rather gentle can all be read as the marks of a society being done in by the abuse of freedom.

This writer has no need to exaggerate:

> It would be reasonable for the young to be intimidated by the momentum of a technology constantly expanding its capacity to take the planet into oblivion. To young eyes, the triumphs

in creating convenience and in communication are less impressive than the progressive evolution of destructive weapons. The cruise missile stirs the mind more than color TV.

Horrifying "Normality"

In his recent book, *The Unheard Cry for Meaning*, Dr. Viktor Frankl speaks of the common complaint of the young in the colleges—"the meaninglessness of it all." It is this feeling, more than anything, that accounts for widespread depression. Its recognition seems the chief inspiration of contemporary literature, having an effect that appears in full strength in modern satire. Writing in the March *Harper's* on Black Humor, John W. Aldredge reviews the novels of Joseph Heller, starting with *Catch-22*:

> Yossarian's problem in *Catch-22* . . . is that he is hopelessly sane in a situation of complete madness. The high comedy of the novel is generated by the fact that military life, when viewed satirically—which is to say, rationally—becomes ludicrous and, in war-time, malevolent. But there is nothing in *Catch-22* that a person of Yossarian's perpetually affronted sensibility would not have perceived in the same circumstances. The boundaries of the normal and predictable are never exceeded, but they are extended satirically to the point where, as happens in wars, all kinds of idiocy, cruelty, obsessive self-interest, and the most inhumane bureaucratic exploitations are made to seem normal and predictable, hence altogether horrifying.

The Deeper Ill

Heller, the critic says, wants to expose ruthlessly "a system, supposedly consecrated to high patriotic service, that could so easily become diabolical because it views people as inanimate objects and destroyed for inane reasons." He goes on to what seems Heller's real point:

> In such a situation Yossarian clearly has abundant provocations for his paranoia. There are real enemies out there, whether on our side or theirs, and, as he repeatedly complains, they are trying to kill him. But the vastly more frightening concern is that if he had no identity as a human being, then his death will have no significance.

Heller's books, Mr. Aldredge believes, are attempts to "articulate the incomprehensible," to find a way out of "the ultimate, terrifying helplessness: the inability to identify or confront the forces that are destroying one's life and preparing one's death."

"Chaos as Order"

> But the deeply lodged suspicion in both *Catch-22* and *Something Happened* is that there is no one at all in charge, that Kafka's castle is in fact empty, that there is no crime for which one eternally stands condemned, no order behind organization, no system behind bureaucratic structure, no governing principle behind government, that what is happening is happening for no reason, and that there is absolutely nothing to be done about it because the causes responsible cannot be located and the very idea of responsibility may have lost all meaning.
>
> This is the radically nihilistic perception behind Heller's new novel, *Good as Gold*. . . . It is all about a society that is fast going insane, that is learning to accept chaos as order, and unreality as normal. The horror is that the time may soon come when the conditions Heller depicts will no longer seem to us either funny or the least bit odd.

What Nietzsche Meant

Writers are the psychic diagnosticians as well as the mirrors of an age. Writers such as Heller in this century but confirm the dark anticipations of those of a century ago, as in the case of Nietzsche, who explained his "God is dead" announcement by saying that he meant: "We have abolished the true world. What has remained? The apparent one perhaps. O no! With the true world we have also abolished the apparent one." Heller reports the loss of both worlds, verifying Nietzsche's prophecy. As, in one of her essays, Hannah Arendt explained:

> In other words, once the always precarious balance between the two worlds is lost, no matter whether "the true world" abolishes the "apparent one" or vice versa, the whole framework of references, in which thinking used to orient itself, breaks down. In these terms, nothing seems to make sense any more.

"Exhausted Sensibility"

Much of "serious" literature has become little more than the symptoms of the disease of materialism, brilliantly recorded by the sharpened intellects of the time, and turned to the uses of black humor. An opening passage in Mr. Aldridge's essay generalizes well:

> If one finds the conditions of contemporary life deranging, one can take comfort from the fact that black humor has identified derangement as the only sane response, has classified it as the prime symptom of entropy, anomie, atomization, and

other derivatives of the Second Law of Thermodynamics, and has perfected certain highly stylized modes of dramatizing it in fictional form. Thus, one knows that whenever the characters in a novel do not resemble human beings, it is because they have been dehumanized by the entropic forces that are fast dehumanizing us all. Whenever a fictional landscape seems fragmented or nightmarishly surreal, so that it is impossible to tell precisely what is going on, one knows that it is intended to function as a metaphor of the disorientation of the psyche when confronted with the bizarre arbitrariness of events. If the experiences and people portrayed in a novel seem trivial or empty, one can be sure they seem so because they represent the exhausted sensibility of the age.

The Tyranny of "Things"

If one were intent on composing a manual for studying the psychology of Kali Yuga, such criticism would be found illuminating, and the books discussed useful illustrative texts. Fortunately, one is not obliged to read such books, save perhaps for a sample or two. We are free to seek food for the mind which does not deny the existence of mind or the significance of human aspiration. Another critic, Denis Donaghue, writing in the *Saturday Review* for March 3, shows how the enormous proliferation of "things" has been affecting people and how they are reacting:

> In the last 10 years or so, people have been getting irritated by objects; by objects as such, as the philosophers say. There is no paradox. We want things; and once got they lose their value, we disown them, refuse to give them the aura they ask for. Writers as diverse as Stanley Elkin, Susan Sontag, and Donald Barthelme are engaged with this matter: how to deal with a situation which has moved from plenitude, to proliferation, to plethora. . . . Two texts: from Emerson, "Things are in the saddle and they ride man." From [Walter] Benjamin: "The construction of life is at present in the power of facts far more than of convictions, and of such facts as have scarcely ever become the basis of convictions."

Biological Patterns

A long article on "Pattern Formation in Biological Development" (*Scientific American*, October, 1978), by Lewis Wolpert, makes occasion for recalling, once more, the definitive statement by H.P.B. in *The Secret Doctrine* (II, 149): *The whole issue of the quarrel between the profane and the esoteric sciences depends upon the belief in, and demonstration of, the existence of an astral body within the physical*, the former independent of the latter."

Mr. Wolpert shows that the differentiation of cells into the parts and organs of the body with highly specialized functions results from not only the genic elements in the cell, but also from the *position* of the cells. Genes will not explain many developmental phenomena. Francis Crick, of DNA fame, has proposed that cells learn the significance of their position from the diffusion throughout the field of development of a "morphogen," although, as Mr. Wolpert says, no "direct evidence" of its existence has been found. The research summarized in this article will recall for some readers the extensive material drawn from modern scientific facts and theories relating to the genesis of form which appeared in Volume 28 of THEOSOPHY (in the series, "The Astral Body," especially Parts V, VI, and VII). Both normal development and the regeneration of lost limbs or claws in lower animals, the *Scientific American* writer says, are possibly explained by "positional information" affecting the differentiation of the cells.

Basis Unknown

Mr. Wolpert says in conclusion:

> I have tried to show that the concept of positional information provides a useful framework within which the development and regulation of biological pattern can be understood and investigated. There is accumulating evidence (some of the most impressive of it from studies of insect development . . .) that cells have a property corresponding to their positional value and that the rules for pattern formation and regulation are very similar in very different systems. If these views are correct, those of us who work on such problems are in the situation of genetics long before DNA was identified as the genetic material: we have rules governing the phenomenology but the molecular basis of the phenomena is completely unknown.

The candor of this investigator illustrates a temper now widely evident among thoughtful biologists.

> It is sometimes held that no real progress has been made until a biological mechanism is placed on a firm molecular basis (until, in this case, the molecular nature of the gradients, or positional signals, is known). Such a view denies the existence of different levels of organization at which one can meaningfully investigate biological processes. . . . Perhaps we should be less apologetic and remember that the study of genetics was (and is) effective at levels other than the level of DNA, and that unless we have the right phenomenology we do not know what we are trying to explain or where to look for the explanation.

The Hidden Designer

Writing in 1893, in *The Ocean of Theosophy*, Mr. Judge spoke of where to look:

> The astral body is the guiding model for the physical one, and all the other kingdoms have the same astral model. Vegetables, minerals, and animals have the ethereal double, and this theory is the only one which will answer the question how it is that the seed produces its own kind and all sentient beings bring forth their like. Biologists can only say that the facts are as we know them, but can give no reason why the acorn will never grow anything but an oak except that no man ever knew it to be otherwise. . . .
>
> The model for the growing child in the womb is the astral body already perfect in shape before the child is born. It is on this that the molecules arrange themselves until the child is complete, and the presence of the ethereal design-body will explain how the form grows into shape, how the eyes push themselves out from within to the surface of the face, and many other mysterious matters in embryology which are passed over by medical men with a description but no explanation.

A Useful Criticism

An especially interesting and important article on the scientific method appeared in the *Technology Review* for February. The writer, Vince Taylor, a professional policy analyst, replies to aggressive criticism from a student who is apparently wholly convinced of the validity of objective scientific analysis. The article has the form of a long, explanatory letter. First he gives an account of the failures of objectivity:

> Policy analysis is failing because its practitioners do not understand the processes they are modeling and analyzing. Scientific method has yielded great success in physical sciences because it is possible to make repeated experiments under precise conditions, varying only selected parameters. Living organisms are more intractable. Although techniques of statistical analysis can help experimenters to guess about the effects of uncontrolled variables, the power of science has proven to be far less in medicine than in, for example, electronics. When I was studying medical care in the mid-60s, I was surprised to find that life expectancies for adults had hardly changed since the early 1950s, and for adult males of some ages they had actually declined. This occurred during the great flowering of the National Institutes of Health, when billions were poured into scientific medical research.

"The Fatal Weakness"

Some policy analysis seems to bear resemblance to a guessing game:

> In analyzing complex, real-world processes that involve human behavior, scientific analysis has proven to be extremely limited. One need look no further than a review of past predictions of nuclear-electricity costs and nuclear power growth to see how badly scientific method can fail: since the mid-sixties, estimates of the cost of nuclear electricity have risen seven-fold, more than tripling after adjustment for general inflation.

Why do such mistakes keep on being made? Mr. Taylor gives his view:

> Conceptually, analysis removes a piece of world process, isolates it, and sees how this isolated piece responds when parts of it are changed. From information so derived, the analyst infers how this part of world process will evolve in reality, and more ambitiously, how its evolution will be affected by specific policy initiatives.
>
> The fatal weakness with this approach, for all policy issues of any significance, is that the aspects of the world ignored are usually equally or more important to determining how the process evolves than those parts included in the analysis.

Assessment of Common Beliefs

The counsels of this scientific analyst to his student correspondent are both practical and philosophical. They seem to illustrate an ongoing change among the leaders in scientific thinking, in this case recalling H.P.B.'s remark (*S.D.* I, 620) that the scientists will be driven out of their materialistic or mechanistic position, "not by spiritual, theosophical, or any other physical or even mental phenomena, but simply by the enormous *gaps* and *chasms* that open daily and will still be opening before them, as one discovery follows the other, until they are finally knocked off their feet by the ninth wave of simple common sense." Mr. Taylor wrote to his critic:

> I would like to help you gain an appreciation that came to me only slowly, painfully, and with much difficulty: how our intellectual concepts and beliefs limit our ability to perceive what is really happening in the world. . . . We see the world through the blinders of our own beliefs. When the world's behavior resists our expectations, as now seems to be the case in many areas of policy analysis, we need to question whether some of our important beliefs are in accord with reality. Un-

fortunately, our most basic beliefs are seldom accessible to our conscious mind: they appear to us as simple, unquestionable observations about reality. . . .

"True Understanding" Needed

To truly see that one of your own beliefs is just an assumption can be liberating. This experience, though, is not amenable to precise programming. You must stretch your mind, envelop your beliefs with contrary thinking, and allow your imagination to roam into forbidden territory without automatically rejecting its perceptions as "absurdities." Be open to life's teachings which, if my life provides any guide, will soon provide you with ample evidence of the fallibility of many of your most cherished beliefs. Chuang Tsu, a Chinese sage of ancient times, said this about people's beliefs: "Our words fly off like arrows, as though we knew what was right and wrong. We cling to our point of view, as though everything depended on it. And yet our opinions have no permanence: like autumn and winter, they gradually pass away." . . .

By holding fast to certain beliefs, you may be denying a part of yourself that would come to the surface if you were willing to accept a somewhat different set of values or beliefs. From my own experience I believe greater acceptance of this other side will make you both a better researcher and a happier person. I have in mind the emotional, feeling, or intuitive parts of your being. That feelings could be as important to understanding and analysis as intellect and logic must sound completely crazy to you, judging from your letter. But if you had lived before the rise to dominance of Western, analytical thinking, for example in medieval times, you would find nothing remarkable in the idea that true understanding comes from more than cerebration.

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